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INTRODUCTION

Lung transplantation (LTX) is an established therapeutic option for end-stage lung disease in selected patients. During the last 40 years more than 40000 transplantations have been performed worldwide (1). Emphysema, pulmonary fibrosis, cystic fibrosis and primary pulmonary hypertension are the most common indications. This type of surgical treatment is increasingly successful with better early and late survival rates. However, LTX is still hampered by persisting problems such as donor organ shortage, primary graft dysfunction, late graft dysfunction, and morbidity related to long-term immunosuppression. This review will address the current clinical LTX and future directions.

HISTORY

Vladimir Demikhov, Russian physiologist and surgeon performed the first lung, heart and heart-lung transplantation in dogs. These remarkable studies demonstrated the technical feasibility of intrathoracic organ replacement (2).

Henry Metras, in 1949 described important technical concepts including preservation of left atrial cuff for the pulmonary venous anastomosis. He proposed the preservation of bronchial arterial system to prevent airway anastomotic problems. Unfortunately this technique never gained widespread popularity (3).

In 1963, James Hardy performed the first human lung transplantation (4). The recipient survived the operation for 18 days and died of renal failure. This first attempt of LTX precipitated a flurry of activity in experimental and clinical LTX. However, the results were very disappointing. By 1980, almost 20 years after the first attempt, a total of 38 patients were transplanted of which 2 survived 6 and 10 months. Most of the patients who survived 10 days or more died of bronchial anastomotic complications.

In 1981, Bruce Reitz and Norman Shumway at Stanford University performed the first successful heart and LTX. This important step opened the way for contemporary clinical LTX results (5).

In 1983 Dr. Cooper and his team in Toronto General Hospital performed the first successful single LTX for IPF (6). This was the first long term survival after LTX. The recipient survived 7 years. By the 1990, Starnes at Stanford performed the first living related lobar LTX (7).

In 1992, Prof Weder in Zurich was performing successfully the first LTX in Switzerland. That was single right LTX in an emphysema patient.

INDICATIONS AND RECIPIENT SELECTION

The indications for LTX have extended over time and include a diverse spectrum of pulmo-

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transplant setting. Decellularized lung, which can maintain a near intact extracellular matrix (ECM) and the complex microarchitecture of the lung, has been shown to be an ideal scaffold for reseeded with cells (92). Thus, recellularization based lung regeneration may prove to be an effective clinical therapy for future treatment of lung diseases (92). Recently, transplantation of bioengineered rat lungs recellularized with endothelial and adipose-derived stromal cells has been performed (93).

However, there are still many issues that remain to be resolved before such bioengineered lungs become available for clinical use. Issues still to be resolved include: the ideal decellularization method, the ideal duration for whole lung recellularization and the minimum number and types of necessary cells (92,93).

CONCLUSION

The additional improvement in post-transplant survival of lung transplant recipients in the recent era at our center is most likely due to a number of factors: Better surgical techniques, organ preservation and intensive-care management likely played a role. In addition, careful post-transplant long-term management by transplant pulmonologists, including rigorous treatment of airway infections, sinus surgery and routine nasal care (CF recipients), long-term therapy with macrolide antibiotics for chronic lung allograft dysfunction (CLAD), and extracorporeal photopheresis in selected recipients with CLAD and recurrent acute allograft rejection might have contributed to improved outcomes at our center as well (94,95).

The two main problems are limited organ supply and failure to ensure long-term allograft function with the current immunosuppression strategies. Increased use of DCD donors, utilization of EVLP to assess and recondition marginal donor organs, and advances in tissue engineering research could overcome at least the limited supply of eligible donor lungs for lung transplantation.

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